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## Qatar airways transit business threatened by Gulf crisis

*Now Qatari airlines are using the airspace of Iran to reach Europe.*

### The Dollar Business Bureau

The political rift between Qatar and four Arab nations - Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, has resulted into a full-blown regional crisis, with the severing of air links.

The events resulted in the cancellation of dozens of flights daily by state-owned Qatar Airways and other airlines from those nations. This also means that Qatari aircrafts have to take long routes, to avoid the vast airspace of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.



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Qatar Airways has turned Doha into an international hub. However the political rift has jeopardised its position as a key transcontinental airlines, according to experts.

“The impact is already bad because it has driven up flight times and therefore costs. As the airspace

tightens, the problem grows much worse," said Addison Schonland, an aviation analyst from US-based AirInsight.

"This is a restraint on the operations of the carrier which is almost undoubtedly now looking at its profits reduced deeply," he added.

Qatar is entirely encircled by Bahrain's airspace and its planes generally cross Saudi Arabian airspace on their route to the rest of Middle East, South America and Africa.

Now Qatari airlines are using the airspace of Iran to reach Europe avoiding the southeastern point of the Arabian Peninsula in order to circumvent Saudi airspace.

Qatar Airways flights from Doha to North Africa are now flying over the airspace of Iran and Turkey toward the Mediterranean Sea, instead of taking the more direct route over Egypt and Saudi Arabia, leading to increased flight times.

However, flights to Europe are not much affected as they are continuing to use the route over Iran, with a little diversion in order to avoid Bahrain's airspace.

Iran has allowed its airspace to about 100 more flights from Qatar daily, increasing air traffic from the Islamic republic by 17%.

Longer routes by Qatari planes will bring down the number of passengers, stated Schonland.

"Future long-haul reservations will come down, because even with the high service and excellent amenities, who wants to sit for long on an airplane?" he said.

Around 90% of the traffic of Qatar Airways through Doha is transit, as per a report by CAPA - Centre for Aviation.

Qatar Airways is the largest international carrier operating in the UAE, and overall fifth after the nation's own carrier, according to CAPA report.

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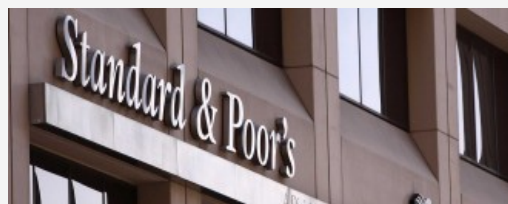


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